



TO PROMOTE POLITICAL
RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH
INFORMED AND ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN
GOVERNMENT AND TO ACT ON
SELECTED GOVERNMENT ISSUES

THE VOTER
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF TALLAHASSEE
www.lwvtallahassee.org
850-309-3005

TALLAHASSEE

VOLUME 19–NUMBER 6

MAY 2011

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 10 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.**
Leon County School Board
Howell Center
3955 W. Pensacola Street
- 11 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.**
Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall 2nd floor
- 16 Monday 1:00 p.m.**
CRTPA Meeting
City Hall 2nd floor
- 17 Tuesday 6:30 p.m.**
LWVT Board Meeting
LWVF Office, Beverly Court
- 18 Wednesday 11:30 a.m.**
Hot Topics
Holiday Inn Suites
2725 Graves Road
- 24 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.**
Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor
- 24 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.**
Leon County School Board
Howell Center
3955 W. Pensacola Street
- 25 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.**
City Commission Meeting
City Hall
- JUNE MEETINGS**
- 14 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.**
Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor
- 20 Monday 1:00 p.m.**
CRTPA Meeting
City Hall 2nd Floor
- 28 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.**
Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor

HOT TOPICS

MAY 18, 2011

**THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE 2011... THE
GOOD, THE VERY BAD
AND THE EXTREMELY UGLY”**



Tallahassee’s own Ben Wilcox discusses the League’s perspective on bills taken up during the 2011 session, from TABOR to the criminalizing of volunteer voter registration.

Few lobbyists at Florida’s Capitol exceed Ben’s effectiveness in safeguarding transparency, fairness, and accountability in government. Currently the League of Women Voters of Florida’s government consultant, Ben was previously director of Common Cause

Florida, and before that, news director for Florida Public Radio and WFSU-FM.

Given his experience, perhaps Mr. Wilcox can shed some light on what we all want to know about our elected leaders in Tallahassee. **“WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?”**

- Time:** Time: 11:30am–1:00pm
- Place:** Holiday Inn & Suites Conference Center
2527 Graves Road (just North of I-10)
- Lunch:** Cobb Salad with Grilled Chicken Breast,
Key Lime Pie & Beverage.
- Cost:** \$18.00 payable at the door
Please call the LWVT voice mail, 309-3005, by
Friday, May 14, 2011 for reservations.



Since the League has to pay for all meals ordered, cancellations received after the deadline will be billed for the cost of the lunch.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I just returned from a weekend visit to Austin, Texas, where I attended graduate school in the 90s. Their legislative session is also in full swing and Austinites are staring down many of the same issues as we are here in Tallahassee, except their state budget deficit is \$27 billion and they lack our wonderful new Fair Districts amendments. My Austin friends were all quite impressed that I had been installed as your president of the local League—showing the League's prestige ranges far. They were pleased that, given my career in music research, I would be so involved in civics. But my passion for civic engagement follows logically from my field research in rural Haiti: I've witnessed what a society without participatory democracy looks like. Haiti's elite (aptly described as a "non-productive possessing class") control government and vast amounts of wealth.

That's not the kind of society I want to live in; given parallels between Haitian and U.S. political histories, I realize how rare and yet fragile our own U.S. democracy is.

If Florida's current Session brings any lesson home to me, it is that the League's work is never done, safeguarding our democracy is a constant vigil.

As Marilyn Wills—possibly our most relentless vigil-keeper—has said, League is only as strong as our volunteers. I'm sure I'm not the only one who can see more that could be done by League than we currently have resources to do. If our challenges are insufficient volunteer time and money to do it all, our opportunities are our membership's expansion, our collaboration with like-minded organizations, and our members' acumen for creative fundraising.

That said, League gets more done, in a more professional manner, than any other membership organization I know. That is thanks to our amazingly dedicated volunteers who really maximize time and stretch dollars.

Thank you for being a member, thank you for inviting others to join, and thank you for volunteering to fulfill our program goals for the next year. I'll thank you in advance as well for sharing your ideas about League with your officers and board members, such as if you see a way our League could be more effective, could reach a diversity of new members, could fill a need in our local civic life.

Rebecca Sager

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HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT: 2010-2011

Study and Action 2009-2011--The Guide to Public Policy Positions of (the) League of Women Voters of Florida provides the statements of adopted program, official positions, and issues for actions for LWV. The *Financing and Delivery of Health Care* is part of the state program under *Social Policy in Florida*.

LWVUS Health Care Position: “Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.”

Social Policy in Florida: “Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice, and the health and safety for all Americans.”

LWVF Program: “Support measures to implement Florida health care in a manner consistent with the LWVUS position on Health Care reform.”

LWVF Issue for Action: “Promote a health care system that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all Florida residents and controls health care costs.”

LWVT 2011-12 Proposed Program Health Care: Support, monitor and take action for ongoing national, state and local health care reform with educational and legislative initiatives which promote socio-economic and racial equity in quality health care access for all.

Throughout this last year the LWVT Health Care (HC) Committee has focused on our local, state and national program goals by supporting and taking action for national health care reform, and supporting local educational endeavors to overcome socio-economic and racial inequities in health. We regularly reported on our activities in the LWVT newsletter *THE VOTER* and you can find these on our local League’s website as well as links to the LWVUS health care reform information. This Spring, we are learning about health care related bills in the Florida Legislature.

We began the new LWVT year last May with our Hot Topics luncheon featuring the Unnatural Causes theme examining inequities in health. Members continued to follow this theme for a definitive period by attending local “Call to Action” community education workshops focusing on food safety, food security and

food environment. Presently, a Tallahassee coalition, including health education professionals previously associated with the Unnatural Causes initiative, are working to address childhood obesity prevention education (COPE).

Our goal of national and state health reform education for our members is on-going through our association with PNHP and AARP. Dr. Ken Brummel-Smith of PNHP presented on “Health Reform: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly,” both in a community forum and at our January Hot Topics and, in another forum, presented on health care systems around the world. Members participated in these forums. AARP has provided written materials on the Affordable Care Act which we have been able to use and distribute for educational purposes. We look forward to continuing our associations with these organizations. We hope that additional references provided in our newsletter reports have been interesting and helpful in understanding health care and reform.

We plan in this new year to learn about the recently formed Leon County Community Health Coordinating Committee (formed since the dissolution of the Health Advisory Board) and will report on pertinent activities.

Please consider becoming a member of the Health Care Committee. Your participation is essential to keep HCC relevant and vibrant. A special thank you to our HCC members for all their time and efforts this past year.

Theresa Chase



“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee has met twice since the last *VOTE*. Our level of frustration about what is happening in the 2011 Florida Legislature has reached the point of essentially giving up on trying to follow and lobby on bills affecting education. If the Republicans want it, it will pass, no matter how silly or detrimental to our schools. Time will tell how these changes will play out for good or bad. LWVUS has

cont'd ED COMM p.4

initiated a national education study which will be focused on the issue of the federal role in pre-K through 12 education. Right now that means reading the two books that National recommends as a basis for further work. They are:

Ravitch, Diane. *The Life and Death of the Great American School System*. Basic Books, 2010

Darling-Hammond, Linda. *The Flat World and Education*. Teachers College Press. 2010

The study will look at issues of equity, funding, and standards and the equity and funding of early childhood education.

Our group has decided to focus on early childhood education. All the issues are interesting and important but we have found that you just cannot do everything and do it all well. Of course, if you would like to join us we could expand our coverage. We really are a nice group of people.

If any LWVT members would like to join us in this study, we would welcome you. Our next meeting is April 27 at the home of M. L. Baker, 2423 Shalley Drive, 1:30 p.m., Phone: 893-5013.

M. L. Baker

NEW BOARD MEMBER

CHRISTINE CROTTY

I was one of those people that took twenty years to finish her college degree graduating in December 2009 from Florida State University. I had earned a B.S. in social sciences concentrating in Public Administration and Sociology. For the past 15 years I have worked at Florida State and the last three of those years have been with the FSU Institute for Energy Systems, Economics & Sustainability. I found myself with time on my hands so I began looking for organizations that might be of interest to me. In early 2010, I met some wonderful women at a symposium my office was sponsoring. Guess who came to listen to this largely acad-discussion? The League of Women Voters of Tallhase

We were a match!

I am looking forward to my term on the Board of Directors. I want to help our local League to increase membership and to continue the amazing work we are doing. On a personal note, I have one thirteen-year-old daughter. She is nearly a straight 'A' student taking high school courses as a middle school student. She is my top priority and my activities with the League are to make her world a better place to live in.

SUMMERTIME—

AND THE LEAGUE-ING IS EASY

Do not be fooled by the hiatus in Hot Topics or **VOTER** publications over June and July; your League is still active over the sultry summer months.

Two vital activities go on over the summer.

The first is our booth at Tallahassee's Saturday Market downtown.

Not only may you volunteer to staff the League's booth from 9 a. m. to 12 noon, but you may take charge of organizing our Saturday market volunteers for a month. Working the booth entails registering voters and passing out educational materials vital to being an engaged citizen. Your efforts help voters while giving the League visibility in the community. Plus you get to enjoy meeting another League member, or possibly hang out with a long-time friend.

Taking charge of organizing volunteers for a month entails doing or delegating:

- getting registration forms to the Elections office
- getting the League table, chairs and box of forms and educational materials to and from the various volunteers
- restocking supplies.
-

Peggy Ramsey has written brief, comprehensive instructions to allow this duty to circulate among the membership. (Pretty easy for a month, it gets tiresome after a long time.)

The second is planning for the upcoming year.

The board will be meeting over the summer to chart out Hot Topic speakers and topics, brainstorming, fundraising, and planning implementation of our League's goals—what we call "Program" which you just voted for at the annual meeting.

Please help the board's planning process by:

- spending a few moments to reflect on League and envision our future
- then send a note or make a call to a board member or officer to share your ideas or concerns.

Board contacts are on second page of this **VOTER** and on lwvtallahassee.org

Rebecca Sager

DUES SCHEDULE CHANGES

At our League of Women Voters of Tallahassee annual meeting on Saturday, April 16, on the recommendation of the Board of Directors, the membership unanimously approved an increase in LWVT annual dues. The new amounts are as follows:

Susan B. Anthony Membership - \$100 (no change)

Individual Membership - \$60

Family Membership - \$90

Student Membership - \$30

As membership renewals are due on May 1, please keep these new membership fees in mind.

This increase was necessary due to increased operational costs at national and state levels, as well as **VOTER** printing costs, etc. Your board is also considering ways to reduce costs of printing and mailing the **VOTER** as well as ways to increase fundraising to keep dues as low as possible.

Dollar for dollar, your League membership is a great value. With the dues you pay locally, you continue your membership not just in the local League in Tallahassee, but also the LWV of Florida and the LWV of the United States.

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Rebecca Sager

50 YEARS IN THE LEAGUE

At the LWVT annual meeting on April 16, four distinguished women were recognized as recipients of the LWVUS 50-year member designation.

Marian Biwer, Ruth Findling, Dot Mann and Florence Wills received certificates and letters of recognition from the president of LWVUS.



CONGRATULATIONS TO MARIAN, RUTH, FLORENCE AND DOT FOR A TOTAL OF 200 YEARS OF LEAGUE LEADERSHIP!



From State



SJR 958

The Florida legislature is considering SJR 958, a measure that would limit the growth in state revenues by the combined rate of inflation and population growth. If approved by the legislature and placed in the state's constitution, the measure would undermine Florida's ability to make long-term investments in areas that are key to economic prosperity. This is not a homegrown idea. The measure is modeled after a deeply flawed law in Colorado, known as "TABOR." Masked as a way to control spending, it resulted in massive cuts to important public services, delayed the state's recovery from the recession, and resulted in a number of unintended consequences. Ultimately, it became such a problem that voters suspended the measure.

Colorado is the ONLY state to have a TABOR, and it proved to be so damaging it was suspended. In 2005, led by a bipartisan coalition of business, senior, civic, children, and faith-based groups, Colorado voters suspended the law to halt the deluge of harmful budget cuts that had occurred and were slated to occur under TABOR. Under TABOR, Colorado fell in many major indicators of performance:

Education

By 2000, Colorado had fallen to 50th in K-12 spending, making the state dead last in the percentage of state wealth devoted to public schools.

The state ranks last in sending disadvantaged kids to college.

Colorado ranks 49th in state support of higher education.

Health Care

Colorado spends less than most other states on public health.

Colorado is at the bottom in rates of prenatal care.

Colorado has the highest rate of uninsured low-income children in the nation.

Colorado ranks 49th in spending on Medicaid. Many doctors don't accept patients on Medicaid because the reimbursement rates are so low.

cont,d SJR p. 7

From National



DOJ DECISION ALLOWING GEORGIA TO BLOCK VOTER REGISTRATION UNDERMINES VOTING RIGHTS

Washington, DC - The League of Women Voters is dismayed by the U.S. Department of Justice's recent decision to allow the state of Georgia to implement a discriminatory requirement that new voters provide a Passport or other proof of citizenship in order to register to vote.

This requirement will disenfranchise thousands of citizens who do not have or cannot afford to acquire the needed documentation to prove their citizenship due to disability, age, illness, transportation, or financial issues. The greatest impact is expected to fall on the elderly and on racial and ethnic minorities.

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) bans racial discrimination in voting practices, but the U.S. Department of Justice recently approved the Georgia law. This decision undermines effective enforcement of the VRA.

The burden of the new law will be greatest for citizens for whom it is most cost prohibitive or inconvenient to take off work, get transportation, stand in line, and apply for documentation. Thus, this requirement would disenfranchise the very people who currently must work the hardest to vote. The vast majority of Americans do not have a Passport and obtaining copies of birth certificates can be difficult and costly.

The League of Women Voters strongly supports the voting rights of all citizens and is working throughout the country to block restrictive legislation.

NEW ADS CALL ON SCOTT BROWN, CLAIRE MCCASKILL TO "PROTECT THE PEOPLE, NOT THE POLLUTERS."

April 29, 2011 - Washington, DC: The League of Women Voters today launched a seven-figure television ad campaign calling public attention to the votes by Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) and Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) earlier this month to block new air pollution standards. The accountability ads call on both Senators to "protect the people, not the polluters."

"Air pollution is a life or death issue. Senators Brown and McCaskill cast dangerous votes that put public health at risk," said Elisabeth MacNamara, national president of the League of Women Voters. "In 2010, according to the EPA, the Clean Air Act saved

the lives of 160,000 adults and 230 infants. Clean Air Act protections also prevented 130,000 non-fatal heart attacks, 86,000 emergency room visits, and 1.7 million acute asthma attacks that year alone. Voting to block clean air standards is bad for America and deadly for many Americans."

On April 4, days before the Senate votes, the American Medical Association warned doctors that increased levels of carbon dioxide, ozone, and other greenhouse gas pollutants make chronic conditions like heart disease and asthma worse.

The campaign includes 30-second spots that point to the public health consequences of the Senators' April 6 votes. The ads depict a child suffering from respiratory illness and ask viewers to consider the votes and "imagine what it could've done - to her."

The television ads in Massachusetts and Missouri will run at a significant level to ensure that millions of citizens will see this important message several times in the coming weeks. In addition to the television ads, a six-figure online campaign will also target high traffic in-state websites and social media outlets.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and the League of Women Voters Missouri joined in this effort.

The League has been a strong and active supporter of the Clean Air Act since its enactment in 1970.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OUT OF TOUCH ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Washington, DC - The following is a statement by Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the U.S.:

"Today the U.S. House of Representatives voted to stop the Clean Air Act from going forward.

"If the House gets its way, EPA would be permanently blocked from regulating harmful carbon pollution.

"The House of Representatives is out-of-touch with reality -- the climate change tsunami is coming."

Economic Development

TABOR failed as an economic development tool for Colorado.

The state's highways and transportation corridors are in growing disrepair with less than 60% rated good or fair.

Only three states lost more jobs in the last recession than Colorado.

In 2002, the per-capita income in Colorado fell faster than in any other state.

Colorado unemployment has more than doubled during the last recession; the state lost 18,000 jobs in 2003 alone.

Despite the time-out, after ten years of TABOR, Colorado's economy and budget was placed in a weakened position as it headed into the current recession. In 2010, business leaders led a coalition to prevent efforts to strengthen TABOR.

FISCAL STABILITY

Prior to the time-out, TABOR resulted in a downgrade of Colorado's bond rating.

Financial analysts specifically blamed TABOR for making the state's fiscal crisis during the last recession worse.

Prior to the time-out, Governing Magazine ranked Colorado's finances as among the worst managed in the country, again due to TABOR.

Since Colorado adopted TABOR in 1992, more than 20 state legislatures have rejected TABOR, and it has been voted down in every state in which it reached the ballot. This has happened in "Red" and "Blue" states alike. The Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, after a full and extensive consideration in 2008, determined that it was not in the best interest of state residents to adopt a TABOR, and declined to place it on the ballot. In past years, Florida and other states have rejected TABOR because it does more than control state spending, as its proponents often claim. It requires massive reductions in vital services that residents want and need — education, health care, public safety, roads, environmental protection, and others.

Adopting the proposed revenue cap, which would restrict the amount of money available to fund these key programs at both the state and local level, would be devastating to Florida. It would hurt not only Florida's children and adults, but also the economy, which relies on educated individuals and up-to-date infrastructure in order to grow.



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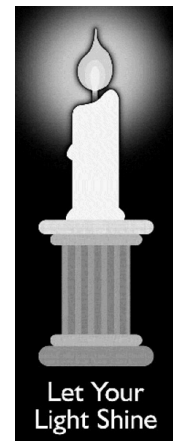
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(MAY1, 2011–APRIL30, 2012)

CIRCLE ANY TOPICS THAT INTEREST YOU

\$100.00 Susan B. Anthony membership _____

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\$30.00 Student Membership _____

I am enclosing \$5.00 for LWVF Lobby Fund _____

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- Publicity
- Membership
- Hot Topics
- Education
- Hospitality/Events

TOTAL _____

Please make all checks payable to LWV of Tallahassee. Mail to LWVT, P. O.Box10216, Tallahassee, FL 32302-2216. You may also renew/ join at www.lwvtallahassee.org. There is a \$2.00 charge for using PayPal.